

THE GUARDIAN

Vol.1 No.4 • Serving Madera County Veterans • Sept 2005

Phone: (559) 675-7766 • Email: dblessing@madera-county.com



Visit our Web Site at:

www.Madera-County.com Go to "Select a Department" then scroll down to "Veterans"

At Veterans the "Guardian" and archived issues may be downloaded.



**A NOTE
FROM
DENNIS
BLESSING**

DRIVING DOWN interstate I-70 minding my own business and here pops up an official looking sign announcing a Cavalry Museum at Fort Riley Kansas. So forward ho to Ft. Riley and sure enough out in the middle of nowhere a Museum sits. These days you have to do "things" to go on a military base. Two picture ID's,

car registration and proof of insurance, blood type etc. don't put anything away you'll need them again at the gate. Now you maneuver through a maze of cement barriers. I ask "where is the Museum" and an M. P. steps forward and says "I'll lead you there sir" So the picture you see to the left is my M.P. escort. I'm not sure but my Cav license plates and 1st cav patch on my hat may have helped. This was a very nice museum and I'll recommend it to everyone if your passing through Kansas on I-70 in the future.



Veterans Service Office

Madera Veterans Office
321 W. Yosemite Ave.
Madera Ca 93637
Suite 101

Hours

Mon., Through Fri. 8-5
Dennis Blessing, Service Officer
(559) 675-7766

Madera Transportation
(209) 358-2898
from Merced (**24 Hr. Notice**)
Oakhurst (559) 658-5399



**CHECK YOUR
"OTHER
BENEFITS"
ON PAGE 2**

News you can use News you can use



The following list of Benefits may be available to Veterans who are VA Disability rated;

All VA disability have other benefits, some are listed below, given according to the amount of their disability rating. Call the Veterans Service Office to see what other benefits you may have coming.

1. Eligibility for additional allowance for dependents.
2. Eligibility for additional aid and attendance allowance for disabled spouse.
3. Enrollment in a higher VA Healthcare Priority Group.
4. VA fee basis outpatient medical card.
5. Eligibility for necessary dental care.
6. Eligibility for sensorineural aids, hearing aids, eye-glasses, contact lenses.
7. Eligibility for health care coverage under CHAMPVA for spouse and children.
8. Eligibility for Service-Disabled Veterans' Insurance.
9. Waiver of VA life insurance premiums.
10. Possible eligibility for special monthly compensation for certain losses.
11. Possible eligibility for one-time assistance in purchase of specially-adapted automobile.
12. Eligibility for education or training under VA Vocational Rehabilitation.
13. Possible eligibility for one-time Special Adapted Housing Assistance.
14. Eligibility for Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance.
15. CAL-VET Home Loan Disability Insurance.
16. Eligibility for property tax exemption on principle Residence.
17. Home loan guaranty funding fee exemption.
18. Golden Access Pass for U.S. National Parks.
19. California State Park pass.
20. Reduced fee for hunting.
21. Reduced fee for basic sport fishing license.
22. Eligibility for 10-point Preference for Federal Civil Service employment.
23. Eligibility for 15-point preference for the State of California employment.
24. Eligibility for Dependents' Education Assistance for spouse and children under 38 U.S.C.
25. Eligibility for CAL-VET College Tuition Fee Waiver For spouse and children.
26. Eligibility for children to Compete for admission to military academies.
27. Eligibility for military Identification card.
28. Possible eligibility for DMV Disabled Veteran License Plates.
29. Eligibility for exemption from Vehicle license fees.

The other benefits you can get will depend upon how high your Disability Rating is but even at zero percent rating there are some benefits. For more information of what your possible "other benefits" could be call your County Veterans Service Office or drop by most will have a list printed out for you according to what percent you are rated with.

Also it is possible to be paid at the 100% rate under certain conditions and based upon what VA calls unemployability and your current rating.

Call for details, questions or help.

The Guardian is published monthly by Dennis Blessing, Service Officer of the Madera County Veterans Service Office. It is freely issued, via email, to all Madera Veterans and Service Organizations. Upon request the newsletter will be e-mailed.

The primary purpose of this publication is to provide County Veterans with a timely news source; effectively informing veterans of VA up-dates and other pertinent information. Hopefully, it will also serve as an inter-group vehicle, announcing important activities and information offered by other local service organizations.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

Dennis Blessing, Publisher

Phone: (559) 675-7766 Email: dblessing@madera-county.com

FEATURED SERVICE

U.S. NAVY



Welcome Aboard NavyOnLine
(NOL)

<http://www.nol.navy.mil/nol/>

NEWS YOU CAN USE

www.bluejacket.com
www.oldbluejacket.com



These web sites have complete alphabetical listing of just about every NAVAL web site!

<http://www.nol.navy.mil/>



U.S.S. CONSTITUTION-UNDEFEATED

Little known American Naval history

The U.S.S. Constitution (Old Ironsides) as a combat vessel carried 48,600 gallons of fresh water for her crew of 475 officers and men.

This was sufficient to last six months of sustained operations at sea. She carried no evaporators (i.e. fresh water distillers!). However, let it be noted that according to her log, "On July 27, 1798, the U.S.S. Constitution sailed from Boston with a full complement of 475 officers and men, 48,600 gallons of fresh water, 7,400 cannon shot, 11,600 pounds of black powder and 79,400 gallons of rum."

Her mission: "To destroy and harass English shipping." Making Jamaica on 6 October, she took on 826 pounds of flour and 68,300 gallons of rum.

Then she headed for the Azores, arriving there 12 November. She provisioned with 550 pounds of beef and 64,300 gallons of Portuguese wine.

On 18 November, she set sail for England. In the ensuing days she defeated five British men-of-war and captured and scuttled 12 English merchantmen, salvaging only the rum aboard each. By 26 January, her powder and shot were exhausted. Nevertheless, although unarmed she made a night raid up the Firth of Clyde in Scotland. Her landing party captured a whisky distillery and transferred 40,000 gallons of single malt Scotch aboard by dawn. Then she headed home. The U.S.S. Constitution arrived in Boston on 20 February, 1799, with no cannon shot, no food, no powder, no rum, no wine, no whisky and 38,600 gallons of stagnant water.



OVER-SHOOT EQUALS CAPTAINS MAST

Any of you **NAVY** guys Remember any of this?



THE REP REPORT



OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM/IRAQI FREEDOM

WHAT IS OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM?

Operation enduring freedom was the United States response to the September 11, 2001 suicide attacks on the world trade center buildings. It commenced on Oct. 7, 2001 in Afghanistan & was aimed at the destruction of the Taliban & their training camps.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM?

The initial military objectives of Operation Enduring Freedom include the destruction of terrorist training camps and infrastructure within Afghanistan, the capture of al Qaeda leaders, and the cessation of terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

WHAT IS OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM?

Operation Iraqi Freedom was the name given to the war begun by the United States, against the country of Iraq. The war commenced on March 19, 2003 in order to disarm Saddam Hussein of his weapons of mass destruction & to remove him from power. The war commenced after President Hussein declined President George W. Bush's ultimatum to either hand over his country peacefully to the United States or face war with the U.S.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM?

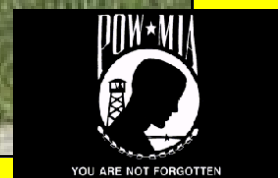
The military objectives of Operation Iraqi Freedom consist of first, ending the regime of Saddam Hussein. Second, to identify, isolate and eliminate, Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Third, to search for, to capture and to drive out terrorists from the country. Fourth, to collect intelligence related to terrorist networks. Fifth, to collect such intelligence as is related to the global network of illicit weapons of mass destruction. Sixth, to end sanctions and to immediately deliver humanitarian support to the displaced and to many needed citizens. Seventh, to secure Iraq's oil fields and resources, which belong to the Iraqi people. Finally, to help the Iraqi people create conditions for a transition to a representative self-government.

WHO ARE THE VETERANS SERVING IN THE TWO WARS?

SERVICE COMPONENT

MILITARY OPERATION	ACTIVE DUTY	RESERVE/GUARD	TOTAL
ENDURING FREEDOM:	3,423	38,663	42,086
MALE	3,188	34,922	38,110
FEMALE	235	3,741	3,976
IRAQI FREEDOM:	38,329	89,268	127,597
MALE	34,477	80,496	114,973
FEMALE	3,852	8,772	12,624
TOTAL:	41,752	127,931	169,683
MALE	37,665	115,418	153,083
FEMALE	4,087	12,513	16,600

DON'T SPEED AROUND HERE!



VETERANS of FOREIGN



**VFW Commander
George Bloch
Post 1981
200 South G Street
Madera Ca 93639**

Congressional Charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars

"The objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars are fraternal, patriotic, historical, and Educational; to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members; to assist worthy comrades; to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their widows and orphans; to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States of America, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws; to foster true patriotism, to maintain and extend the institution of American freedom; and to preserve and defend the United States from all her enemies. Whomsoever."

Our initials---VFW---are emblazoned on some 9,000 Posts around the world. We are the nation's oldest major veterans group, and we've been a part of the country's social fabric for more than 100 years. We are an organization of more than 1.7 million veterans who have served overseas in war zones or areas demanding hazardous duty. VFW traces its origins to 1899 when a group of 13 Spanish-American War veterans convened in Columbus, Ohio, to assist their fellow veterans. By 1914, this group had merged with two other Spanish-American/Philippines War veterans groups to become known collectively as VFW.

A few of VFW's accomplishments this past year on a national level: Community service projects provided over 19 million hours of volunteer service. VFW and Auxiliary members spent or donated nearly \$67 million to complete these projects. The Voice of Democracy high school audio essay contest provided more than \$2.5 million in college scholarships. VFW service officers handled over 104,000 claims, resulting in over \$1 billion in recovered entitlements. Locally, Post 1981 has done much for veterans and the community. Perhaps many of you have witnessed our Honor Guard and Rifle Squad at the funerals of local veterans, a humbling service that we take great pride in providing.

I present these few facts and figures as a means of illustrating that VFW is a group of veterans who are committed to serving veterans and the community in which we live. I encourage you to seriously contemplate the above and, ultimately, to not only apply for membership, if you qualify, but to ask those among your family, your circle of friends and your neighbors to apply for membership. I know that you'll not be unhappy with your decision to do so.

For more information call me at (559)673-7741, Richard Morrison at (559) 706-0145, or David Valdivia at (559) 675-1342

OBLIGATION	CERTIFICATION																	
<p>In the presence of Almighty God, I do, of my own free will and accord, solemnly promise and declare that:</p> <p>I will bear true allegiance to the Constitution of the United States of America and I will always be loyal thereto.</p> <p>I do further solemnly promise and declare that I will comply with the Congressional Charter, bylaws and Ritual of this order and I will always be loyal thereto. I will never wrong or defraud this organization--nor a member thereof nor permit any wrong to be done to either if in my power to prevent it.</p> <p>I will never propose for membership any person not eligible nor one whom I know to be unworthy.</p> <p>I will never make known to anyone not authorized to receive it any of the work of this order.</p> <p>Should my affiliation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States cease in any way I will consider this pledge as binding outside of the order as though I had remained a member of same.</p> <p>All this I promise and pledge upon the honor of a true comrade and a citizen of our great republic.</p> <p>_____ Applicant's Signature</p> <p>I have investigated the character and campaign medal service of the applicant and hereby endorse him/her as eligible and worthy of membership in the VFW.</p> <p>Signed _____</p> <p>Date _____ Member of Post # _____</p>	<p>Admission Fee paid \$ _____ Dues paid \$ _____</p> <p>Date _____ LM Fee paid \$ _____</p> <p>(See Sec. 104 bylaws)</p> <p>The Investigating Committee has performed its duties and recommends <input type="radio"/> Approval <input type="radio"/> Rejection.</p> <p>(Signatures of Committee below)</p> <p>_____ Committee Member</p> <p>_____ Committee Member</p> <p>_____ Committee Member</p> <p>Applicant approved _____ Obligated _____</p> <p>Date _____ Date _____</p> <p>The annual dues of each member includes a year's subscription to the VFW Magazine, official publication of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Each applicant, upon acceptance, will be so notified and furnished with an official dues receipt showing acceptance for the year for which dues or Life Membership fees have been paid.</p>	 <p>LIFE MEMBERSHIP FEES</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Attained Age</th> <th>Fee</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Through 30</td> <td>.....\$245</td> </tr> <tr> <td>31-40</td> <td>.....235</td> </tr> <tr> <td>41-50</td> <td>.....215</td> </tr> <tr> <td>51-60</td> <td>.....195</td> </tr> <tr> <td>61-70</td> <td>.....165</td> </tr> <tr> <td>71-80</td> <td>.....125</td> </tr> <tr> <td>81+</td> <td>.....85</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any applicant whose 31st, 41st, 51st, 61st, 71st or 81st birthday will occur after the date of application and on or before December 31st of the current calendar year, shall pay only the fee that would be required on his next birthday.</p>	Attained Age	Fee	Through 30\$245	31-40235	41-50215	51-60195	61-70165	71-80125	81+85
Attained Age	Fee																	
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61-70165																	
71-80125																	
81+85																	



AMERICAN LEGION

Madera Post 11, 200 South G Street

Support Our Troops

"We've been there. We're here for you now".



A pocket resource directory for U.S. troops and their families.
[Learn more about this program to support our troops.](#)

At this moment, America's finest young men and women are serving in harms way on our behalf in places thousands of miles from our shores. In Iraq, they liberated oppressed people. In Afghanistan, the Philippines, parts of the Middle East and even here at home, they are preventing another Sept. 11. In over 130 countries, the U.S. military is finding and eliminating terrorists committed to destroying our way of life. As crucial as these operations are, however, America's service personnel find their strength in the unfailing support of family, friends and the nation they serve.

It is important that everyone gives them all the support possible. Veterans of past wars know how much it meant to receive a letter or care package from folks back home. While today's war on terrorism has altered some of the ways to say "thank you" because of security requirements, there are many ways that Americans of all ages can show support for our troops.

**American Legion
Commander
Roger Baldwin
Madera Post 11
200 South G Street**

On this Web site, you will find a number of avenues to show your support. Make a contribution to The American Legion's Legacy Scholarship Fund for children of service personnel killed in action. Donate blood. Purchase a flag or yard sign to display proudly in front of your home. Post a message thanking those in uniform for their courage. Organize a prayer vigil at your church for our president and military. Volunteer at a VA

The American Legion Membership Application

(Name)		(Phone)	
(Mailing Address)		(Date)	
(City)	(State)	(Zip)	(Post #)
Please check appropriate eligibility dates and branch of service below			(Dues)
<input type="checkbox"/> Aug 2, 1990 - cessation of hostilities as determined by U.S. Government			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 20, 1989 - Jan. 31, 1990			
<input type="checkbox"/> Aug. 24, 1982 - July 31, 1984			
<input type="checkbox"/> Feb. 28, 1961 - May 7, 1975			
<input type="checkbox"/> June 25, 1950 - Jan. 31, 1955			
<input type="checkbox"/> Dec. 7, 1941 - Dec. 31, 1946			
<input type="checkbox"/> April 6, 1917 - Nov 11, 1918			
<input type="checkbox"/> Merchant Marines 12/7/41 - 8/15/45 (only eligibility)			
<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Army			
<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Navy			
<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Air Force			
<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Marines			
<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Coast Guard			

I certify that I served at least one day of active military duty during the dates marked above and was honorably discharged or am still serving honorably.

Signature of applicant _____ Name of recruiter _____



Receipt of Dues
(Please Print)

From _____ for 19 _____ Post # _____
\$ _____
Recruiter's Name _____
Recruiter's Signature _____

hospital. How you show your appreciation for our troops is up to you.

As long as these dedicated Americans fight for us, we will be here for them. Indeed, they are our nation's newest veterans. The American Legion salutes them.

NEWS FOR VETERANS

California Department of Veterans Affairs

Contact: Jerry Jones

Jaime Arteaga
Legislation and Public Affairs
916-653-2192

Fax 916-653-2611

June 17, 2005

CARE PACKAGE ITEMS NEEDED FOR INJURED SOLDIERS

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Tom Johnson recently was forwarded the following letter from Senior Master Sergeant Elizabeth Christiansen who is assigned to the 332 Air Expeditionary Wing, Expeditionary Medical Group, currently deployed to Iraq. In her letter SMSgt. Christiansen requested assistance in securing some much-needed items for wounded military personnel. CDVA calls upon the California veteran community to accept the challenge and assist in securing these items.

SMSgt. Christiansen's letter:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. As you probably are aware, we are an extremely busy, advanced, state of the art, trauma hospital and see upwards to over a thousand patients a month. Some patients are returned to duty directly from the hospital while others are sent over to the CASF for air transportation to higher levels of health care at places such as Landstuhl, Germany.

The reason I am writing is to request your help in finding certain items that we are in need of here. Due to our high patient load, we are in constant need of hygiene and clothing items. Because of the urgency of our patient's condition, they usually arrive here without these necessities. When our rotation arrived here at the beginning of May the supplies seemed adequate, however they have rapidly dwindled, are almost gone, and we are not sure where to find replenishment. Any assistance you can provide us will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your kindness and all the work you do for the American forces.

Respectfully submitted,
ELIZABETH M. CHRISTIANSEN, SMSgt, USAF

Items for the "care packages" should be sent to:

SMSgt Elizabeth Christiansen
332 AEW EMDG/SGH
APO AE 09315-9997

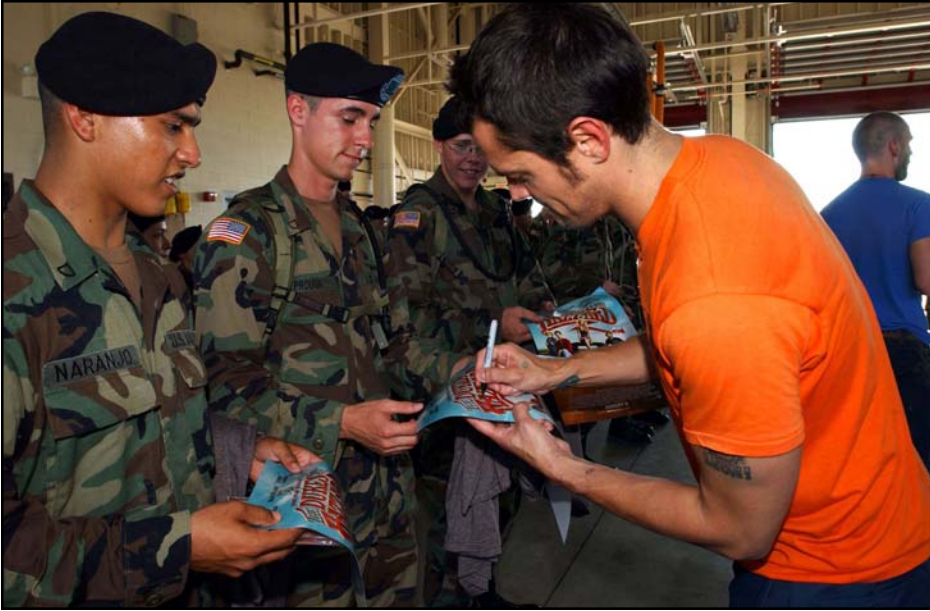
Wish list of health and comfort items for patients:

- Air freshener (spray)
- Baby wipes
- Chap Stick
- Deodorant
- Female personal hygiene items
- Kleenex



CONTINUED ON PAGE 11, CARE PACS'

FROM THE FRONT



Johnny Knoxville from the 'Dukes of Hazzard cast on Aug. 3, 2005 signing autographs for the Texas National Guard 38th infantry division soon to Deploy.



Soldier at the ready.



Training Iraq police



Saying good by to two friends in Iraq.



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Patrick DeForest, Company D, 1st Battalion, 159th Aviation Regiment, and his wife 1st Lt. Rebecca DeForest, Company B, 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, serve as UH-60 Blackhawk pilots at Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Balad, Iraq. U.S. Army photo by Spc. Jerome Bishop

FROM THE FRONT

Service members in Al Asad honor their fallen warriors

ALASAD, Iraq — Dozens of service members here gathered July 21 to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice during the course of their duties in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

During a small ceremony inside the military support complex, one of the streets on the air base was dedicated as Memorial Lane in honor of those whose lives have been lost. Army Col. George R. Harris, commander of the 326th Area Support Group and native of Leavenworth, Kan., said one particular warrior honored during the ceremony was Cpl. Andrew D. Brownfield, from Summit, Ohio, who was killed here last year.

“We are here to honor all those who have given their lives for the cause of freedom in Iraq, yet I single out Cpl. Brownfield for two reasons,” Harris said. “The spot where this Marine gave his life for the Global War on Terrorism is here, and one of his close friends from [Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26] is here with us today and will help unveil our sign.”

Sgt. Edwin E. Medina-Acevedo, an aviation supply clerk from Miami, met Brownfield here last year, and the two became good friends. He was asked by an acquaintance in the area support group to take part in the dedication ceremony.

“I’m honored to be here, and I’m moved to see this is for Cpl. Brownfield and all others who have been lost,” said Medina-Acevedo.

Among the guests of honor to the ceremony were Air Force Maj. Gen. Bill Essex, commander of the Army & Air Force Exchange Service and Bethel, Ohio, native, and Brig. Gen. Robert E. Milstead Jr., 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) commanding general.

“When we lose friends there’s often a concern that they are lost, gone and soon forgotten,” said Milstead, a native of Abilene, Texas. “Times like today dispel that concern. No greater honor exists than to protect that which we cherish most – our faith, our families, our freedoms, our values, our way of life – many individually different, yet each distinctly American.

“We participate in a cause with honor that we will look back on with pride. Just as generations before us, we too have a responsibility to the future. Our fallen brothers and sisters have met that responsibility head on, they have held the standard high and we are all better for it.”

The service members whose lives have been lost establishing

they stroll down Memorial Lane. Their sacrifice demonstrates that freedom is never free and serves as encouragement for others who continue to forge a brighter future for the people of Iraq. The service members whose lives have been lost establishing a free Iraq will be in the minds of Al Asad residents as they stroll down Memorial Lane. Their sacrifice demonstrates that freedom is never free and serves as encouragement for others who continue to forge a brighter future for the people of Iraq.



One of the streets aboard the air base was dedicated in honor of those whose lives have been lost in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Sgt. Edwin E. Medina-Acevedo, an aviation supply clerk from Miami assigned to Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26, unveils the Memorial Lane sign assisted by one of the Soldiers from the 326th Area Support Group on July 21.

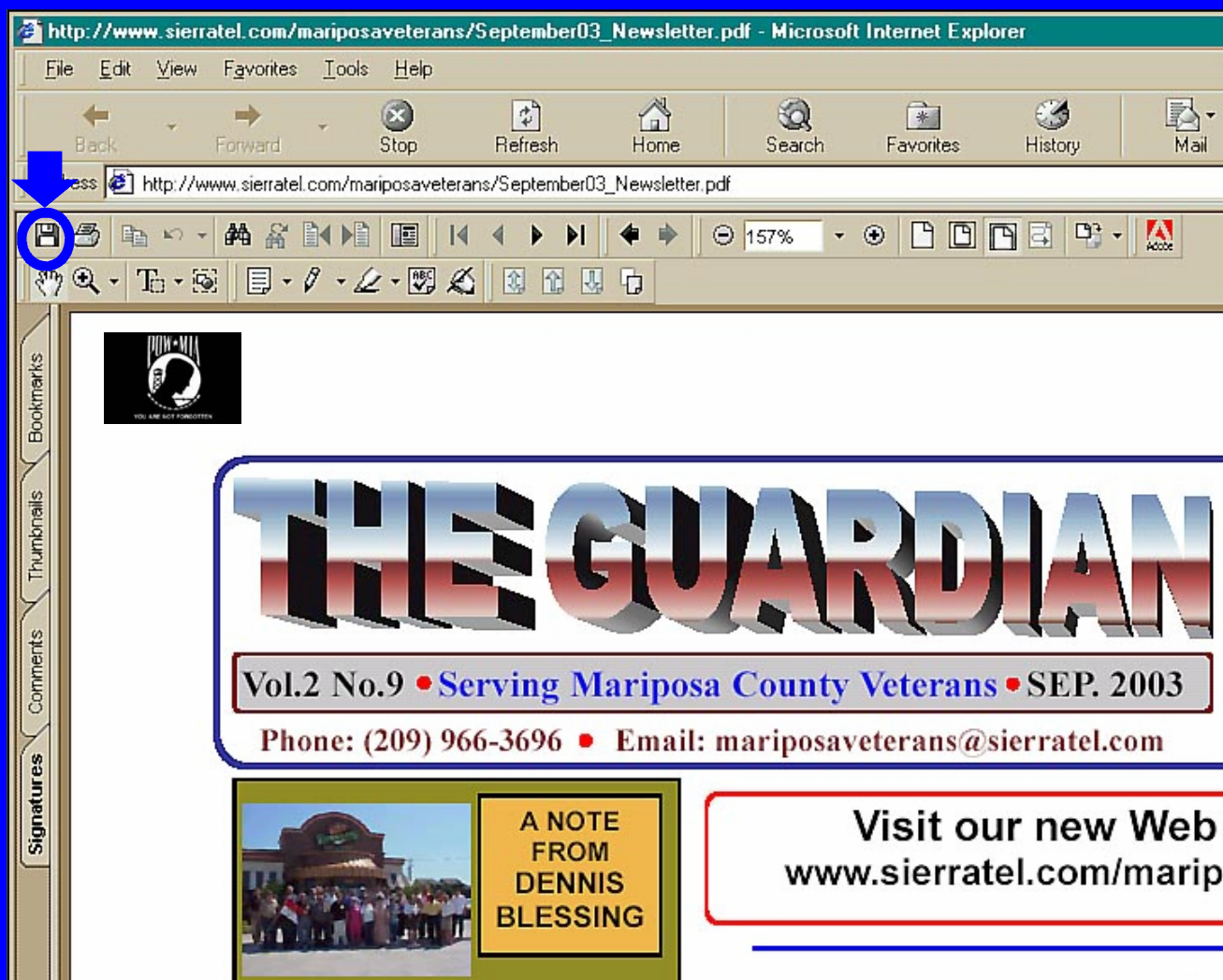


Saving the Newsletter

Saving your Newsletter to "My Documents" allows you to view again, without having to re-load the file on-line. Follow these simple instructions:

After the Newsletter has been loaded onto your screen and you have scrolled through all the pages, click the circled icon in the upper left.

In the drop down box, save to "My Documents."



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

- Lotion
- Magazines, CDs
- Mirrors
- Q-tips
- Shaving cream & Razors
- Shampoo & conditioner
- Stationary & Pens
- Sunscreen

- Soap & body wash
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes, mouthwash, floss
- Sweat pants & matching shirts/T-shirts (Male & Female)
- Socks (Male & Female)
- Sports bra's (small, medium, & large)

- Woman's underwear
- Boxers
- Towels
- Washcloths
- Pillowcases
- Twin bed sheets



VA Reviewing Approved Stress Claims

Associated Press | August 12, 2005

WASHINGTON - The government is going to take a new look at the claims of about a third of the military veterans who now get disability payments for post-traumatic stress disorder.

The Veterans Affairs Department will begin a yearlong review next month of 72,000 cases after an internal study found inconsistencies in the way the claims were decided, including many cases approved though they lacked required medical evidence.

Millions of dollars a year could be involved.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, a mental illness characterized by subjective symptoms like flashbacks and nightmares, can be difficult to diagnose and quantify.

The review will cover veterans whose claims were approved between 1999 and 2004 and who receive full disability benefits - \$2,299 a month - for PTSD alone or in combination with other conditions, said VA spokesman Phil Budahn.

The review won't consider the other side of the question, whether some veterans were wrongly denied benefits, and that has some critics upset.

"We need to pay as much attention to improper denials as we do to improper grants," said Illinois Rep. Lane Evans, ranking Democrat on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Budahn said the VA could look at that later, "but first we're just going to keep our focus on the problem that's been identified."

Randy Reese, national service director for Disabled American Veterans, complained that the review would divert resources from the VA's backlog of several hundred thousand disability claims yet to be processed.

Last year, the VA spent \$4.3 billion on PTSD disability payments, not including medical care.

The number of vets receiving compensation benefits for the illness rose nearly 80 percent between 1999 and 2004 - from 120,265 to 215,871. During the same period, benefits for all types of disabilities grew by just 12 percent, to about 2.5 million.

So far, about 10 percent of the stress syndrome increase comes from veterans of the [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#) wars, Budahn said. Some experts say PTSD is diagnosed too readily. "PTSD went from being problematic being accepted as a condition, to being almost too easily accepted," said Wilbur Scott, a University of Oklahoma sociologist who has written about the disorder.

Budahn attributed the increase mostly to rising awareness of the illness, thanks to education efforts by the VA, veterans' organizations and health care workers.

If the current review finds a veteran's claim does not include adequate proof of a "stressor" - the specific event or events that trigger the mental illness - the veteran will be asked to provide more information and could ultimately lose benefits.

Proof of a service-related triggering event is one of the VA's few hard and fast requirements for PTSD disability benefits.

The inspector general's report last May found that more than 25 percent of the PTSD cases reviewed lacked adequate proof of a service-related stressor.

"Some disabilities are inherently prone to subjective rating decisions, especially conditions such as PTSD where much of the information needed to make a rating decision is not physically apparent," VA inspector general Richard Griffin said.

"This subjectivity leads to inconsistency."

Valid stressors can be difficult to prove.

"Sometimes it's a bureaucratic nightmare to get the evidence. People in wartime aren't sitting there with a steno pad keeping good records," said Mary Ellen McCarthy, Democratic staff director for the House Veterans subcommittee on disability assistance.

The VA said it would work with vets to help them prove their cases. It will also be on guard for possible fraud - one vet in the sample review last spring submitted as evidence a personal account written by someone else and published on the Internet.

Some Iraq war vets with PTSD say identifying a single, specific stressor can be arbitrary.

"I think the whole year over there (in Iraq) was my stressor, but they actually wanted a specific incident," said Jesus Bo-canegra, 23, of McAllen, Texas. His disability status won't be part of the review because it was approved this year. "I just gave them two."

Col. Charles Hoge, chief of psychiatry and behavior services at Walter Reed [Army](#) Institute of Research, said that while most service members with PTSD can identify incidents that affected them deeply - for instance, their worst firefight, losing a buddy or seeing injured children - "the reality is that there are also stressors that are ongoing."

Hoge has found evidence of PTSD symptoms in about 15 percent to 17 percent of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"For most people who go into a war environment, it will affect them in some way," Hoge said. "An important minority of people are going to be affected to the degree that they need treatment."



Education: The Best Kept GI Bill Secret

The VA pays for OJT!

Most veterans know that they can use the G.I. Bill to pay for the costs of education. But did you know that you can also receive up to **\$12,000** in tax-free benefits for training twenty-four months in an On-The-Job or Apprenticeship training program?

That means that **the VA will pay you up to \$753 a month (\$216 for Reserve)** tax-free, on top of your regular salary!

Here's how the GI Bill On-The-Job training program works for you!

If you are a veteran or currently in the guard or reserve the On-The-Job Training (OJT) Program offers you an alternative way to use your VA (G.I. Bill) education and training benefits. While training, you can receive monthly training benefits from the Veterans Affairs in addition to your regular salary.

OJT programs may be approved in a wide variety of occupations. Some in trades that may relate to your military occupation, but many that don't. Currently approved programs range from law enforcement officers to mechanics to electricians.

Qualifying Jobs:

To qualify, your job must meet the following criteria:

- You must be supervised at least 50% of the time.

- Job training must lead to an entry level position.

- (Management training programs do not qualify)

- You must be a full-time paid employee, not on commission.

- Your training must be documented and reported.

- You cannot be already qualified for the Job by previous experience.

- You must be recently hired (within one to two years).

- The Job must require at least six months training to become fully trained.

- The Employer may be private; local or state government

Eligibility:

You may be eligible if you are otherwise [eligible for the GI Bill](#) either under the Active Duty (Veteran) or Reserve GI Bill programs and:

- You are no longer on Active Duty;

- You were recently hired or promoted;

- it's been less than 10 years since you left the service; or

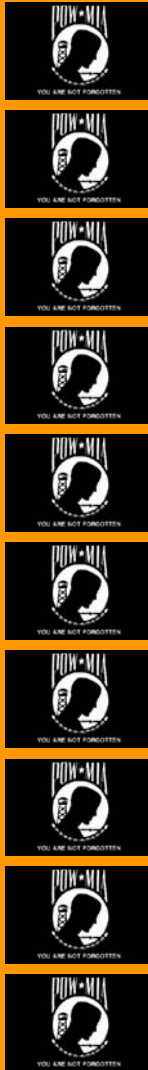
- you are currently a member of the Guard or Reserve (Reserve GI Bill).

THE GUARDIAN

SERVING MADERA COUNTY VETERANS



NEVER FORGOTTEN



**NATIONAL POW/MIA
RECOGNITION DAY**

SEPTEMBER 16, 2005



YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

News You Can Use

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

VA Regional Office, Oakland

1-800-827-1000

VA Life Insurance Center

1-800-669-8477

VA Medical Center Toll Free (Fresno)

1-888-826-2838

Cal-Vet Home Loan Information, (Fresno)

559-445-5466

Patient Advocate (Fresno VA)**

Ext. 6970

Telephone Advice Nurse (Fresno VA)**

Ext. 6933

Outpatient Clinic – Merced/Atwater (Castle)

209-381-0105

Service Representative: (DAV, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5642

Service Representative: (VFW, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5647

Service Representative: (AMVETS, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5816

Service Representative: (American Legion,
Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5648

**Fresno VA Pharmacy, (to order 14 days before
you run out call by touch tone phone)**

559-225-6100 Ext. 5333

CVSO Madera County (pager) D. Blessing

559-661-6895

Fresno Vet Center (Fresno)

559-487-5660

Transportation to VA Medical appointments

** Call VA Fresno toll free number first

1-888-826-2838